



## NURTURING FAMILIES NETWORK

*Prepared for the Appropriations Committee for the March 4, 2011 Public Hearing on the Governor's Biennial 2012-2013 Budget Plan*

(44) - 2c

March 2, 2011

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Evelyn Flamm and I am the Clinical Supervisor of the Nurturing Families Network (NFN) at the Fair Haven Community Health Center in New Haven. I am here *again* today to urge you to vote against the Governor's proposed budget cuts that would eliminate 13 Nurturing Families Network community-based sites in Hartford and New Haven, and immediately terminate child abuse and prevention services to families in two of Connecticut's poorest cities. Additionally, an expected 75 non-profit employees will lose their jobs.

NFN's evidence-based child abuse prevention program provides intensive home visiting services to *the most vulnerable* families facing linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers to accessing critical services. Poverty is a major risk factor for child abuse and neglect. Data shows almost 700 mothers a year in Hartford and New Haven would lose services. 95% of these mothers are racial minorities, 91% are single moms, 76% are unemployed, 50% have a history of abuse, and 46% don't have a high school education. Many of our first time moms are teens.

NFN has been proven to be effective in reducing child abuse and neglect. The rate of abuse and neglect in participating families is only 3% as opposed to 20% in similar high risk populations. If the community-based NFN sites close, rates of child abuse and neglect will rise and additional families will end up in DCF care. Each DCF case costs the state roughly \$30,000 a year, compared to only \$3,000 for NFN services.

While data is meant to be compelling, informative, and alarming this data does not give justice to what will happen to these already fragile neighborhoods and families when services are quickly stripped from their community. Children will especially suffer if child abuse prevention services are cut in times of economic difficulty. I am deeply concerned that eliminating NFN services will push these vulnerable and already stressed families over the edge. We will lose these families! We will see them in the criminal justice system, unemployment lines, out of school, and placed in foster care—costly and avoidable expenses to our state.

Many of you will remember Kenyada, a 25-year-old who testified before the Appropriations Committee during last year's hearing. When Kenyada enrolled in our program, nearly three years ago, her baby was one month old. As a child, Kenyada experienced homelessness, street fighting, substance abuse and little or no nurturing from parents who were addicted to crack and in and out of jail. Kenyada did not complete high school but was interested in becoming a nursing assistant. Today, Kenyada will tell you that it was because of her home visitor's support and trust in her that she decided to go back to school, obtain her GED, her Human Services Certificate and recently enrolled in Gateway Community College. In the process, Kenyada learned to advocate for herself. She has obtained stable housing, accepted mental health services for her own self-care, and sought and obtained employment. Kenyada's home visitor will tell you that she is a

Fair Haven Community Health Center  
Nurturing Families Network Program

374 Grand Avenue • New Haven, CT 06513 • (203) 777-7411 • fax (203) 401-2044

positive influence in her daughter's life, and that because of the support of NFN, she is an asset to the community that once terribly failed her.

The relationship we have with Kenya, as with all our families, is the foundation of our work. Strong, trusting relationships are built over many months of visits to a family's own home. How dare we cut these funds and end the trusting relationships we have built with these families and the communities that we serve?

It is because of the success stories of young women like Kenya that the Obama administration chose to allocate millions of dollars for evidence-based intensive home visiting services over the next 5 years. These funds are intended to supplement, not supplant, state and other funding streams. Our state will forfeit \$12 million in federal funding if the Nurturing Family Network budget is cut below 95% of its state appropriation level as of March 23, 2010.

On behalf of our Nurturing Families Network Program, our families, and the children that we call the future, I again urge you to vote against the Governor's proposed budget cuts that would eliminate the Children's Trust Fund's - Nurturing Families Network community based sites in Hartford and New Haven.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Gorsline-Flamm  
Clinical Supervisor